

Singapore

## **Illegal came up with rape idea, says accomplice**

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AN ALLEGED rapist orchestrated the abduction and rape of a 28-year-old Malaysian woman on March 5 last year, his accomplice told the High Court yesterday.

Manikkam, a 30-year-old Indian national now serving a 14-year sentence for abduction and attempted rape, alleged yesterday that the accused, 28-year-old V. Murugesan, had suggested the idea.

Testifying yesterday, Manikkam said he and Murugesan, an Indian illegal immigrant, were tipsy after drinking beer and stout on the evening of March 4 last year.

They were walking back to their room when they spotted the victim, who appeared to be drunk.

'The way she was seated and with her bra exposed, she appeared sexy.

'Murugesan was tipsy and he suggested to me to talk to the victim,' he said.

Despite suspecting Murugesan had an ulterior motive, he said he approached the woman twice, but she ignored him and walked away.

Murugesan then took him to the end of the block in Woodlands Drive 70 and showed him a 'small room', an enclosed rubbish area for bulky goods.

Murugesan told him to grab the woman and Manikkam dragged the struggling victim to the room, where the alleged offence took place.

Manikkam said Murugesan lay on top of the victim for about two to three minutes. Manikkam said he then tried to rape her too, but someone started banging on the door.

The two men then fled the scene.

Manikkam was arrested along Commonwealth Crescent more than two weeks later on March 22 last year. He then led police to Woodlands Centre Road, where Murugesan was also arrested.

He had with him a Singapore identity card belonging to someone else.

Murugesan, who is defending himself, denies abducting and raping the woman. Cross-examining Manikkam yesterday, he blamed the older man,

saying he took the initiative to talk to the woman, follow her and drag her to the refuse centre.

Murugesan also claims he tried to prevent Manikkam from raping the woman.

However, investigating officer David Chan Wai Mun said DNA analysis of a semen stain found on the victim's underwear had provided a positive match for Murugesan.

After Deputy Public Prosecutor Thong Chee Kun closed his case yesterday, Justice V. K. Rajah called on Murugesan for his defence.

Murugesan will take the stand today.